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## CONVENTIONAL ARMS CONTROL NEGOTIATIONS IN EUROPE

by John Toogood

*There is potential for significant developments in European arms control negotiations in 1986. A Western initiative in MBFR at the end of 1985 has already injected dynamism into those long moribund talks and there are indications that an agreement on Confidence and Security-building Measures will emerge by the end of the summer in the separate negotiations in Stockholm. Although some points of detail in this paper may thus be overtaken by events, the more basic description and comments should remain valid.*

One of the legacies of the heyday of detente in the early 1970's is a multilateral East-West dialogue focusing on conventional arms control in Europe. These talks provide two important forums for Canadian participation in negotiations on conventional arms control and disarmament.

To begin, it is useful to place the deliberations in perspective. The concentric circles in Figure 1 illustrate the inter-relationships of the various global and regional forums.

The outer ring represents the two organs that address disarmament affairs at United Nations headquarters in New York. Both are deliberative bodies that do not themselves negotiate instruments of arms control. The functions of the two are, in part, similar. Each debates issues of arms control; during the process all concerned gain an understanding of the positions and preoccupations of others. In the Assembly, resolutions are tabled and voted upon, some of which recommend action to be taken in negotiations. That more specific function, in a global context, is carried out by the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva — the second ring — where delegations from 40 countries, representative of all the various groupings with the United Nations, are assembled.

The next two rings represent the regional conferences in Europe that are the main subject of this paper. CSCE stands for Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The United States and Canada participate along with 33 European countries. The conference consists of all NATO and Warsaw Pact countries and all the neutral and non-aligned in Europe except Albania. (See list of participants appended to this paper.) MBFR stands for Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions. Delegations from countries of the two military alliances meet in Vienna, and are charged with negotiating mutual reductions in their conventional forces in central Europe.

Finally, the innermost circle represents the bilateral negotiations between the US and the USSR on nuclear and space arms.

Working inward, from the broad international concerns of the UN, to the attempts to reduce European conventional forces, to the central issue of

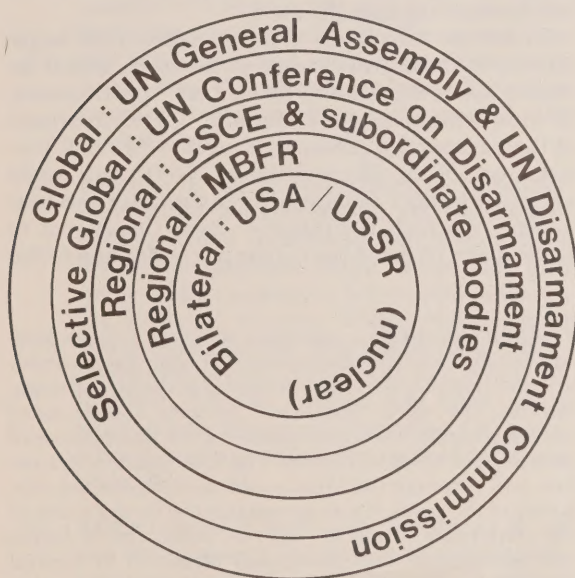


Figure 1.



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reduction and control of nuclear weapons, these concentric circles may be viewed as depicting the increasing seriousness of the stakes. Further, the two inner circles reflect the key determinants of NATO security policy: deterrence and defence. This policy is carried out with strategic nuclear weapons, theatre nuclear weapons in Europe, and conventional forces. All are on the agenda of the two arms control negotiations. Moreover, this weapons triad is interdependent; if one leg is strengthened or weakened significantly, then theoretically at least, the other two should be modified if the balance between East and West is to be maintained. Careful orchestration of both defence posture and arms control efforts is therefore needed if security is not to be diminished.

Canada has a seat at the table at all of the negotiations except the superpower bilaterals where the Canadian input is effected through the NATO Council. The Canadian presence at the European regional conference tables reflects the fact that Canadian troops are stationed there and are a part of the military security structure in Europe.

## MBFR AND CSCE

MBFR and CSCE are two separate negotiations. Both began officially in 1973, after preliminary talks, and the proximity in timing was not accidental. For many years the Soviet Union, motivated by a desire to gain formal recognition of post-war boundaries, had called for an all-European security conference. In the West, there was a movement in the late 1960's to withdraw American troops from Europe. Thus it became evident that a bargain was possible: states within NATO as well as other western European countries, would agree to enter into the political negotiations about security in Europe, negotiations which the Soviets desired; in exchange the Soviet Union would agree to negotiate NATO-Warsaw Pact mutual troop reductions, rather than awaiting unilateral withdrawals by the United States.

Both MBFR and the CSCE operate by consensus; there is no voting and an objection by any one member can block an agreement. However, the agendas, participants, and operating methods are quite different. The CSCE is a political process that spans all dimensions of relationships among states in Europe ranging from principles of conduct such as human rights and human contacts through economic exchanges to military affairs. It is a negotiation among 35 sovereign states, each operating outside any membership in a military alliance, although in practice close consultations among allies is of course the norm. On the other hand, MBFR has a more precise mandate to negotiate NATO and Warsaw Pact force

reductions. Thus the neutral and non-aligned nations are not included, and the dialogue takes place on a bloc-to-bloc basis.

It should also be noted that while agreement was reached in the CSCE as embodied in the 1975 Final Act of Helsinki, almost 13 years of effort has so far failed to produce a written accord at the MBFR talks.

## MBFR\*

Central Europe is the arena for the greatest concentration of troops and military equipment in the world. While figures can vary, in part because of different counting methods, none would deny that there are at least two million armed men in the region. Because this is such a heavily armed area, negotiations and discussions amongst the protagonists are exceedingly important.

The mandate of MBFR is to seek reductions and limitations in the manpower and armaments of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. The zone under scrutiny is comprised of the three Benelux countries and the Federal Republic of Germany in the West; and Poland, Czechoslovakia and East Germany in the East. Soviet and American troops in that zone would be subject to reductions and limitations, as would Canadian and other foreign troops stationed in Europe, as well as indigenous troops. The home territories of the two superpowers are excluded. This is one of the major factors affecting the negotiation because there are important differences of distance and time required for the two superpowers to send reinforcements into the area.

There are two classes of participants in the negotiation: 1) those with troops in the area, which includes Canada, known as "direct" participants; 2) those with no troops in the area, but still members of their respective alliances, known as "special" participants. Of the 16 members of NATO only seven are in the former category, five in the latter and four — one of which is France — have chosen not to participate. (A list of participants is appended to this

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\*"MBFR" is actually a misnomer although it is the term commonly used in Western circles. During the preliminary talks that preceded the convening of the formal negotiations, the word "balanced" became a code word meaning higher reduction quotas for the East because of their higher troop strengths. The East rejected this notion and although the West would not concede the substance of the point, it was agreed that the formal name of the conference would be "Mutual Reduction of Forces and Armaments and Associated Measures in Central Europe". In Vienna negotiators bridge the gap by use of the term "Vienna Talks" in lieu of either title.



paper.) Three of seven direct participants, selected on a rotating basis, meet with their opposite numbers from the Warsaw Pact once a week at so-called "informal" sessions. In addition all delegations from both sides meet once a week in formal plenary sessions. Just as important as either of these structured encounters — some would say more so — is a constant round of social occasions where the negotiating dialogue continues. All proceedings are, by agreement between the sides, confidential, but a press conference is held after each plenary.

Speeches, statements, proposals, rebuttals are made in the name of the bloc concerned: there are no national initiatives in this East-West dialogue. It follows that meetings within each alliance to coordinate positions are frequent and, because of the need for advance agreement on the text of all prepared statements, arduous, at least in NATO. The principle troop contributors — the USA, West Germany and Britain — carry the most weight in these private discussions, but everyone is free to put forward ideas and proposals.

The reasons for the lack of a formal agreement are described below but in the almost 13 years of negotiation a number of important issues have been resolved, albeit only on an informal basis. The most significant of these are as follows:

- a) Parity of manpower between East and West will be maintained in the area at lower collective levels. This means that notwithstanding the much greater distance that United States reinforcements would have to travel, the West will not be entitled to station any aggregate number of troops in the area in excess of the limit imposed on the East. The agreed concept of collectivity is also important but there is still some disagreement about whether or not there will be national ceilings within the overall total.
- b) Reductions will be undertaken by all participants with troops in the area, and those maintaining major formations will take what is termed "a significant share" of the total. This point reflects a concern felt on both sides but for different reasons. Within NATO there was unease that the East might reduce non-Soviet forces only, leaving the Red Army untouched. On the Eastern side there was a similar concern about the West Germans. This provision ensures that neither country is exempted.
- c) Reductions will begin with the forces of the two superpowers. As the two dominant military powers on either side this was recognized as being only reasonable by all concerned.

- d) There will be no limitations on the locations of military units in the area. This proviso recognizes the practical fact that when troops are reduced, both sides would probably wish to rearrange the posture of forces remaining.
- e) Six accords have been reached in principle on ways to verify a general agreement, although some very important details remain in dispute. Points of agreement are:
  - (i) Advance notification will be given of certain military activities such as major exercises and troop movements;
  - (ii) On-site inspections will be carried out to verify compliance;
  - (iii) Points of exit from and entry to the area will be established with observers present from both sides;
  - (iv) Relevant information about forces remaining in the area will be exchanged throughout the lifetime of an agreement;
  - (v) There will be no interference with national technical means of verification;
  - (vi) A consultative commission will be established.

Notwithstanding these various points of convergence, major hurdles remain to be overcome before any MBFR treaty can be signed. For example, while the notion of on-site inspection is accepted, a very wide gulf remains between the two sides regarding the number of inspections that would be permitted, the rules under which they would be carried out and the degree to which the acceptance of inspection would be obligatory. The East is reluctant to accept a binding commitment to inspection, while the West insists on it. Both sides, however, acknowledge the need for further negotiations on this issue.

Until recently the other root problem was a longstanding disagreement over the number of Eastern troops now in the area, but a way to circumvent this impasse may be emerging. Eastern and Western figures differ by as much as 150,000 men, and the Soviets and their allies have refused to discuss this discrepancy in meaningful detail. They argued that, since both sides could agree on the levels that would remain after reductions took place, there was no need to reach agreement on existing levels. The West contended that agreement on the size of reductions was essential and that this in turn would require prior agreement on the numbers that were already there.

However the most recent Western proposal, put forward in December 1985, accepts the Eastern approach. The West has suggested modest US and



USSR withdrawals (5,000 and 11,500 men respectively) to be followed after one year by a three year cap on forces remaining. Information would be exchanged about the numbers present and this would be subject to on-site verification. Thus the "data dispute," as it is known in MBFR jargon, would be on the shelf, so to speak, for the first year and in the ensuing three years it would only reemerge if Western inspectors found evidence — or believed they found evidence — of Eastern duplicity in the figures they provided. The reverse — Eastern complaints of Western duplicity — is unlikely to happen largely because Western figures have not been seriously disputed in the past by Eastern negotiators.

There are also differences as to whether armaments reductions, which are called for in the agreed mandate, should be negotiated as part of a first agreement or set aside for treatment later. The East contends that the issue should be settled; the West states that, given the geographical problem of the comparative remoteness of the US, it should be left to each side to determine what it wishes to do with the armaments of forces withdrawn.

Nor is there agreement that common ceilings be flexible enough to allow additional United States troops to be present temporarily in Europe for short-term military exercises. (Canadian and British troops would be eligible as well.) The East insists that ceilings must be rigidly observed at all times.

While there is still some distance to go before overall agreement can be reached, both sides find the process of negotiation valuable in itself. Talking about these issues provides an opportunity for the representatives of the governments involved to gain an understanding of the motivations and objectives of all participants. Such a dialogue is essential in the increasingly complex world of conventional forces and armaments.

If agreement is reached, the Canadian Forces in Europe will be affected. Although their small size will exempt them from taking a significant share of reductions, they will be a part of NATO's collective limitation and they will therefore be subject to inspection by the East. Furthermore, Canadians will participate in the administration of any overall regime that finally caps the sizes of forces allowed in this heavily militarized area of the world.

## CSCE

The Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) was negotiated over a two year period culminating in a summit conference at Helsinki where 35 heads of government signed the document in August 1975. The process goes on in the form of overall review and other

meetings to discuss particular subjects within the basic document.

The first chapter of the Helsinki Final Act contains ten principles which are to guide relations among the participating states. Two of these principles reflect the central preoccupations of East and West. For the East, the third principle states in part that the signatories "regard as inviolable all one another's frontiers and . . . will refrain from assaulting these frontiers." This quasi-recognition of post-war boundaries is balanced to a degree by a sentence in another principle which accepts the notion that frontiers can be changed by peaceful means. For the West, the seventh principle spells out human rights in some detail and in various ways commits states to respect them. This principle, too, is balanced by another which stipulates that signatories will refrain from intervention in one another's internal affairs.

The second chapter lays out ground rules for cooperation in the fields of economics, science, technology and the environment. It covers commercial exchanges, industrial cooperation, trade, science and technology, transport, tourism and many other topics. This is followed by a brief declaration relating to the Mediterranean area. The third and last main chapter contains provisions regarding cooperation in humanitarian fields, including human contacts, which has within it a section important for many Canadians on the reunification of families. Chapter three also has sections on information, culture and education.

The document concludes with a brief fourth section providing for further meetings. Two major meetings to review implementation of all aspects of the Final Act have been held so far, one in Belgrade in 1977 and one in Madrid which ran from 1980 to 1983. A third is scheduled to be held in Vienna beginning in November 1986. A number of more specialized meetings have also been held on such matters as peaceful settlement of disputes, science, and various other matters. One of these was held in Ottawa in June of 1985 on the subject of human rights.

Like MBFR, the working sessions of all CSCE meetings are closed to the public under the agreed rules of procedure, but individual delegations are much more liberal in keeping the media and interested groups informed about developments.

As regards arms control, the first chapter of the Final Act contains a section setting out certain confidence building measures, or CBMs. In the words of a 1981 United Nations report on the subject, CBMs "aim at strengthening international peace and security and at fostering a climate of trust and international cooperation among States to facilitate progress in the disarmament field." The Final Act of the CSCE provides for two degrees of obligation,



permissive and compulsory. The notification of major military manoeuvres in Europe — which is defined for this purpose as extending 250 kilometres into the Soviet Union (and Turkey) — involving a total of 25,000 troops or more, is compulsory. The exchange of observers at these or other military exercises is voluntary. There are also additional permissive measures that encourage the notification of other smaller manoeuvres as well as major military movements.

Since 1975 the compulsory notification of all major manoeuvres in Europe has been honoured by all CSCE signatories in accordance with the terms of the agreement, with one possible exception by the Soviet Union at the time of the Polish crisis. (There was some ambiguity as to whether all of the troops involved were in fact within the 250 kilometre CSCE zone of the Soviet Union.) Observers have been invited to some manoeuvres but when the Soviets were hosts the opportunities for meaningful observation were quite restricted. NATO countries and some of the neutral and non-aligned nations have notified Warsaw Pact states of some small manoeuvres. No one has given prior notification of a military movement, as distinct from a field exercise or manoeuvre.

Thus the record of implementation can be appraised as generally satisfactory, as far as the letter of the agreement is concerned. But it also indicates that firm, clear obligations are required for CBMs to be effective, and that voluntary measures add little to mutual confidence. With this in mind a mandate was agreed at the Madrid CSCE review meeting to enter into new negotiations to develop a tighter compulsory regime and to proceed further. Significantly, the name of the new measures was changed to confidence and “security building” measures.

### CDE\*

Stockholm was selected as the venue for these negotiations which began in January 1984. No agreement has yet been reached. To overcome the weaknesses of the existing CBMs and their limited area of application the agreed mandate calls for compulsory measures to cover the whole of Europe,

which is understood to mean eastward to the Ural mountain range in the Soviet Union. These measures are to be “of military significance and politically binding” as well as verifiable. Progress in Stockholm will be assessed at the next main CSCE review meeting commencing in Vienna in late 1986 and the CDE mandate provides for the possibility of supplementing the Stockholm effort at that time, by adding other more substantial disarmament topics to the CDE agenda.

The goals of participants from NATO countries at the CDE are to reduce the possibilities of surprise and to enhance predictability. To achieve these goals, they want to have all parties make more information available about peacetime military activities, and to accept on-site observers and inspectors.

With these aims in mind NATO participants tabled proposals on: a) the exchange of information on the structure of ground and air forces in the area; b) an annual exchange of forecasts of military activities as well as notifications to be given closer to those events; c) a tightening of provisions for observers to attend such activities; d) means of verifying compliance with these measures, including on-site inspections; e) an enhancement of the means of communication between states. The proposals of the neutral and non-aligned participants are similar, but these nations have added measures that would constrain certain activities, such as placing a ceiling on the size of permitted exercises.

For their part, the Soviets and their allies have espoused what is known as a “declaratory approach,” with, as a centrepiece, a proposal for a declaration on the non-use of force. This approach is consistent with Soviet initiatives in other forums such as the UN General Assembly.

As to prospects for an agreement, hard bargaining has only just begun and it is very often the case in successful arms control negotiations that essential compromises are made, not because of intrinsic merit, but as a result of outside events that heighten the political will on both sides to find mutually acceptable solutions. For the CDE, the CSCE review meeting in 1986 with its attendant assessment of progress in Stockholm, may well provide sufficient incentive for some sort of an accord to be reached.

### COMMENTARY

In the context of the East-West confrontation, the MBFR talks seek reductions and controls on conventional forces while negotiations on nuclear weapons are left to the two superpowers. CSCE addresses the multifaceted political dimension. The approaches to arms control in MBFR and the CSCE/CDE differ. The former seeks manpower and armament reductions and limitations from the outset,

\*This again is a misnomer. Negotiation of a mandate for this conference proved to be very difficult and until it could be accomplished the conference had no name. For ease of daily reference it picked up the shorthand appellation “Conference on Disarmament in Europe” or CDE, a title that is still used informally. The formal, correct title that was eventually agreed is “Conference on Confidence and Security-building Measures and Disarmament in Europe”.



plus certain measures associated with such limitations, mainly in the area of verification; the latter seeks to develop measures to build a sense of increased confidence and security independently so as to reduce tensions and create a political climate more conducive to military reductions.

Should the CDE receive a mandate at the 1986 CSCE review meeting in Vienna to address force reductions, the future of MBFR as a forum may become uncertain, not only because of duplication of effort but also because the CDE would address forces throughout Europe, while the MBFR negotiations are restricted to the zone in the central part of the continent. However, MBFR could usefully take on some sort of crisis control function in addition to (or in lieu of) the dialogue on force reductions. Because the MBFR talks are a bloc-to-bloc, non-political arena — or at least as non-political as any such effort can be — they have value, if for no other reason than that the exchange of information between the two blocs at the weekly meetings is conducive to increased understanding. In that sense the MBFR exercise is a confidence-building measure in itself.

By any standard, accomplishments in East-West arms control over the past several years have been modest. Neither side has been willing to pay the price demanded by the other in most of the major undertakings. Extreme caution has characterized the approach of both: the East is reluctant to divulge information about its military strengths and capabilities and to accept meaningful on-site inspection; the West resists the notion of constraints on military activities as proposed in the CDE, and refuses to discuss reductions of conventional armaments (as distinct from manpower) in MBFR. The situation is made more complex by the possibility of the negotiated reduction of nuclear weapons in Europe, because such a development would increase NATO's reliance on the effectiveness of its conventional forces to deter aggression. Any significant reduction of conventional forces, on the other hand, would increase reliance on nuclear weapons and the declared intention to use them should conventional strength prove inadequate in war. Thus paradoxically and ironically, the case can be made that arguments in support of nuclear weapons reductions and non-first use of nuclear weapons declarations have implicit within them support for increased conventional capabilities. The counter argument is, of course, that lower levels across the board would maintain the same stability that has been a characteristic of the military confrontation in Europe for many years. Moreover, the contention that neither nuclear nor conventional capabilities should be altered in isolation contains a premise which may not be entirely valid; that is, that the existing distribu-

tion of military capabilities between those forces is very precise and finely tuned.

Dominating such abstract considerations, however, is the matter of political will to reach agreement in any of the forums. It is a widely held view that a favourable political climate is needed for advances in arms control; certainly such a state of affairs facilitates the identification of common ground. In addition, outside events can frequently provide a greater stimulus to productive negotiation than the internal dynamics of the negotiation itself. But agreements can be reached even when times do not seem propitious: for example, the mandate that enabled the convening of the CDE was settled during a nadir in East-West relations brought on, in part, by the downing of the Korean airliner.

For Canada, NATO membership and the permanent presence of Canadian forces in Europe have provided the entrée to participate in negotiations among countries of the continent. The internal discipline that is imposed by NATO members on themselves can be frustrating and a constraint on independent national initiatives outside the confines of the Alliance. (The Trudeau peace initiative of 1983-84 demonstrated that this need not always be the case, however.) It is also true that the Allies frequently settle on the lowest common denominator of policy on many arms control issues. But membership in the Alliance provides opportunities to consult, to explore possibilities and to press national views. The prospects for successfully persuading other nations of the validity of Canada's position is greater inside the Alliance.

The negotiations in both MBFR and the CSCE/CDE are complex and difficult. This is because the issues are complex and difficult. The fact that all parties have agreed to meet and to discuss them is in itself an accomplishment. As in all multilateral forums the process of negotiation in the MBFR and CDE allows each side to explore and develop common ground with the other, and to understand better the motivations behind their actions.

In the high days of detente the then Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mitchell Sharp stated at the CSCE meeting of Foreign Ministers on 4 July 1973, "We are laying the groundwork for a new kind of world — a world which should be better than the one we have known." Less than four years later Mr. Klaus Goldschlag, speaking as the Special Representative of the Secretary, said at the convening of the first review meeting of the CSCE on 6 October 1977, "We are still in a situation where stability probably owes as much to fear of nuclear war as it does to any political arrangement we have yet succeeded in making." This latter view remains valid, perhaps more so than ever. But the effort to give practical effect to the first must continue.

## APPENDIX

### 1) Participants in MBFR

NATO	Warsaw Pact
<i>Direct participants (i.e. having troops stationed in the reduction zone):</i>	<i>Direct participants:</i>
Belgium, Canada, Federal Republic of Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands, United Kingdom, United States of America	Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic, Poland, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
<i>Special Participants:</i>	<i>Special Participants:</i>
Denmark, Greece, Italy, Norway, Turkey	Bulgaria, Romania
<i>Not participating:</i>	(Hungary is a participant but its status has not been settled: the sides merely agreed to disagree at the preliminary talks.)
France, Iceland, Portugal, Spain	

### 2) Participants in CSCE and CDE

#### NATO:

Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States of America

#### Warsaw Pact:

Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

#### Neutral:

Austria, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland

#### Non-Aligned:

Cyprus, Holy See, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Malta, Monaco, San Marino, Yugoslavia

## SUGGESTED READING

Because ongoing negotiations consist of proposals and counter-proposals and the CSCE process continues in various ways, books on such subjects can quickly become dated. The annual journal of the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS) in London, *Strategic Survey*, contains authoritative discussions of annual events and places them in an informative and thoughtful overall context. That Institute's companion journal, *The Military Balance*, also an annual, is probably the best reference document for factual information about military strengths year by year.

Articles in the *NATO Review*, a bi-monthly publication, are also good sources for more detailed descriptions of Western proposals in negotiations.

The events leading up to the convening of MBFR and the underlying factors that continue to bear on that negotiation are well described in a book by John G. Keliher, *The Negotiations on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions*, published by Pergamon Press.

*Adelphi Paper*, number 176 by Lowther Ruehl, published by IISS and titled *MBFR's Lessons and Problems* remains another good reference notwithstanding the years that have elapsed since its publication in 1982.

No definitive overall description of the CSCE has apparently yet been published in English but a new book, *Canada and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe*, edited by Robert Spencer and published by the Centre for International Studies of the University of Toronto, provides a great deal of information on the process and meetings from the inception of the CSCE to the conclusion of the Madrid review meeting in 1983, as well as Canada's role.

On confidence-building measures a great deal has been written in various books and journals, particularly in recent years, but the benchmark work remains a three part *Adelphi Paper*, numbers 147, 148, 149 by Jonathan Alford, published in 1979.

John Toogood retired in 1985 from the Canadian Armed Forces. Between 1973 and 1983 he was a member of Canadian delegations to a number of arms control negotiations including both the CSCE and MBFR. He is now Secretary/Treasurer of the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security.

The views expressed in this paper are the author's own and should not be taken to represent the views of the Institute and its Board.

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